



## CHADO STATEMENT ON SUNSET REVIEW OF REGULATION OF HEARING INSTRUMENT SPECIALISTS - 11/14/2011

My name is David McMahon, and I am vice-president of the Connecticut Hearing Aid Dispenser's Organization (CHADO). I came here today to present CHADO's views on how hearing instrument specialists are regulated in our State, how they should be regulated, and some frightening concerns for the future.

Our Board of Directors feels the State DPH has done an outstanding job of regulating hearing instrument specialists for the past 40 years. We also believe the current program has protected and served Connecticut's hearing-impaired consumers remarkably well. And we believe today's Staff Briefing clearly supports our stand.

Hearing aid dispensing is an interesting combination of high-tech and high-touch. We are required to examine patients' ears for potentially serious diseases, yet we do not have medical training per se. We evaluate people's hearing and take impressions of their ears using syringes. We fit sophisticated devices costing thousands of dollars to patients of all ages. We counsel patients and families on how to communicate better.

If any of these tasks aren't performed properly, patients' health and/or well-being can be at risk. Hearing-impaired consumers may be particularly vulnerable since many are elderly. Consumers in Connecticut are fortunate to have a strong regulatory structure that helps ensure public safety and good value for their money (Medicare and most insurance policies do not cover hearing aids).

The findings in today's Staff Briefing show just how well the current system has worked. First, the briefing states that in each of the past 3 years, DPH has had an average of only two complaints.

This could mean that perhaps less, or no, regulation is needed. However, as stated earlier, there is a great *potential* for abuse and incompetence in this industry. The low number of complaints testifies to the strength of Connecticut's strict regulatory program. And by the way, this program is an incredible value to the State. According to

DPH, the entire program costs the State a total of \$6,000 yearly and brings in revenue of \$15,900!

Finally, there are some frightening new threats to public health in this field, including hearing aids being sold directly to consumers via the Internet in violation of State and Federal law, as well as cheap amplifiers which can damage consumers' ears and/or hearing. With new threats like these on the horizon, the State should not be weakening its regulation.

In conclusion, we urge the Committee to recommend continuing the Hearing Instrument Specialist regulation program in its current form. Ours does not seem to be a specialty whose regulation should require sunset review. The nature of our profession requires *and will continue to require* a strong, effective program to best protect the growing number of hearing-impaired consumers in our State.

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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